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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [MU](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CRISIS IN LEBANON; DANGER OF REGIONAL
WAR; CALL FOR CEASEFIRE; ARAB LEADERS AND PUBLIC OPINION

11. SUMMARY: "Lebanon is burning, and the whole world is standing
still watching," according to government-owned daily "Oman,"
which also calls for a ceasefire to stop "Zionist aggression." A
columnist for "Oman" condemns Arab governments for "acting
against the will of their citizens." Privately owned "Al-Watan"
thinks Israel wants a regional war. END SUMMARY.

COVERAGE

12. Positive coverage of the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement was
offset in the Omani press by continuing, heavy coverage of Arab-
Israeli strife. On Friday July 21, "Oman's" led front-page
coverage with "American House of Representatives Agrees on a Free
Trade Agreement with the Sultanate." Below, however, was a
series of four pictures related to Arab-Israeli strife, including
a close-up of a Palestinian mother crying at a morgue upon seeing
her son's body, an Israeli artillery unit firing towards southern
Lebanon, and a foreigner with a baby in his arms being evacuated
from Lebanon. Also on July 21, private daily "Al Watan"
relegated news of the FTA's passage to a mention beneath the
fold, dwarfed by a large picture of the sister of a Palestinian
who was killed by Israeli fire in a Gaza refugee camp. Heading
the front page was "Israel Threatens to Invade Beirut and the
Lebanese Army Prepares," accompanied by a large photo of smoke

rising from the town of Amariya in southern Lebanon.

¶3. On Saturday, July 22, "Al-Watan's" headlined "America Warns the Security Council Not to Stop the Aggression on Lebanon," adjacent to a large picture of Israeli reserves lining up on a road near Lebanon's southern border, with an inset showing a wounded, pregnant Lebanese woman on a stretcher. Beneath the fold was the headline, "American Planes Kill Iraqis and an Infant," accompanied by a photograph of a weeping man standing over the corpse of an Iraqi girl.

¶4. On Sunday July 23, both "Oman" and "Al-Watan" carried a special business supplement with a Ministry of Commerce and Industry statement that hailed the U.S.-Oman FTA as "one of the most significant modern economic developments towards enhancing trade liberalization policies and integrating the Omani economy into the global one." The timing of this statement was important, coming as it did on Renaissance Day, the Omani national holiday celebrating the 1970 accession of Sultan Qaboos.

BLOCK QUOTES: WORLD STANDING STILL WHILE LEBANON BURNS

¶5. Government-owned "Oman" (circulation 38,000) on July 17 editorialized on "The Regional War and the Fall of International Legitimacy":

"This unjust war (with strange blessings from the U.S. and Russian) against Lebanon and its people is a crime to be added to the Zionist regime's crimes that it has been committing for more than a half century. Regional war is not far off, if the Israeli escalation continues, as it continues to try and pull Iran and Syria into the circle of war. International legitimacy has proved its failure, and the Security Council could not issue a resolution for a ceasefire. What is needed now is to stop Israeli violence through the Security Council and to negotiate about other pending issues. Lebanon is burning, and the whole world is standing still watching, especially the Westerners who sing songs of justice and human rights."

ISRAEL'S EXPANSIONIST AGENDA

¶6. On July 19, "Al-Watan" (privately owned daily, circulation 42,000) asked: "Israeli Operations in Gaza and Lebanon: Are they Bait?"

"Israeli operations in Gaza and Lebanon are a cover for its expansionist agenda in the Middle East. Israel will use these operations as an excuse to build a coalition and later attack Iran and Syria, using American support. They intend by this destroying and attacking to block countries who call for their rights, and to teach a lesson to those who are seeking to recover what belongs to them."

CALL TO CEASEFIRE

¶7. "Oman" also wrote about the importance of peace in the Middle East on July 24 under the headline, "Stopping the Aggression is Necessary for Regional Peace":

"A ceasefire that will stop the Zionist aggression is among the critical steps that should be taken on the Lebanese issue. All efforts meant to stop aggression are unlikely to work without U.S. permission. The new Middle East that the American Undersecretary of State spoke about has no meaning in light of the current armed conflicts, and America's quagmire, in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the occupied Palestinian territories. Any future designs for the region will surely meet with many problems and objections."

ARAB GOVERNMENTS FLOUT PUBLIC OPINION

18. Also on July 24, Ubayid al-Shaqsi, a professor at Sultan Qaboos University, wrote an article for "Oman" entitled "Arabs and Resistance":

"Arab governments, as usual acting against the will of their citizens, have failed to deal with the regional crisis. The double standards applied by these regimes and the United States of America is causing them to lose face...they call for wider public participation, all the while applying pressure in order to change public opinion."

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